

Dear W.C.,

I was wondering if you could help my family. I am a single mother raising my five year old daughter along with my niece and two nephews. My sister passed away from a drug overdose two months ago and I have been granted custody of her three children. Their father is nowhere to be found. I now am struggling to pay the rent, utilities and my car is too small for all of us. I lost my job because of the amount of time I had to take off work to settle my sister's affairs and care for the children. Her children have suffered neglect and now grief over losing their mother. They are just starting to come out of their shell. I would hate to add homelessness to their already troubling lives. Please help us.

Dear Readers,

We all hear about the growing drug epidemic in our communities. The addiction rates are on the rise and many children are affected by their parent's terrible lifestyle choices. As I have said before, we do our best to investigate each situation to be sure we are not helping those that are addicted to drugs or alcohol. The fellow creations that are affected the most by these addictions are the children and family members of the addict. That is where our assistance would be directed in this week's column.

I made a surprise visit to the woman that requested our assistance. I wanted to assess for myself the children and lifestyle of this family. I arrived at the apartment address and knocked on the door. I could hear several children inside so I had a feeling I was at the correct address. The door was opened by a woman with two young children hiding behind her. After I introduced myself I could see the surprise on her face that I was at her door. Once I showed my identification she invited me inside. The two young children continued to hide behind the woman. The woman explained they were her sister's two youngest children that were not old enough for school yet. Her daughter and her sister's older son were at school. I tried to talk to the children but I could see they were afraid. The woman explained they had seen a lot in their young lives. She did not need to elaborate for me to see they had been traumatized.

The woman showed me around the small two bedroom apartment. She shared her room with the girls and gave the two boys the other bedroom. The woman set the children up with some toys on the floor so we could talk softly out of their hearing. Once the woman sat to talk I could see how exhausted she was. The dark circles were evident. I asked if they had enough food and toiletries. The woman said, "We have been eating noodles and peanut butter and jelly. My niece has terrible food allergies that my sister neglected so we are working on her diet. It is hard to eat from the food pantry when your car barely holds all the children and they can't really accommodate a special diet. I also need to purchase diapers still for the little ones here because they have regressed in their potty training from all the stress. Or maybe my sister just didn't care enough to potty train anymore." I could hear the anger and pain in her voice. I asked the woman about the niece's food allergies and made a list of appropriate foods. I also asked about diaper sizes and other food and toiletries they could use including tooth brushes, tooth paste, toilet paper and soap. I sent the list to one of our volunteers to purchase while I continued with my visit.

I asked if she wanted to talk about her sister. The woman teared up but quickly wiped away her tears. I could see she was trying to compose herself, especially with the children close enough to see her. After a moment she said, "My sister was a beautiful woman and a good mother until she injured her back a few years ago. They gave her pain killers that I thought were much too strong. They left her unable to care for her children, these two were just an infant and a toddler at the time. When the doctor would no longer fill her pain pill prescription I guess she turned to whatever she could find on the streets. I was already watching her children when I could but I was working all the time so it probably wasn't enough. I can only imagine what they saw. If I had only known what she was doing maybe I could have got her to stop..." She was covering her mouth to keep the children from hearing her sobs. I said, "I have dealt with many families affected by drug addiction. There is nothing you could have done to stop her. She would have had to want to stop on her own and get professional help to get her to a clean and sober lifestyle." The woman nodded her head knowing I spoke the truth. She said, "I know I can't blame myself for her death because my sister was very stubborn and never listened to my advice our whole lives. But I do blame myself for not stepping in sooner with the children."

After our emotional conversation we moved on to talk about her present situation with the children. She told me about her inability to leave the two younger children in daycare until they were more stable. She said they had most likely witnessed their mothers overdose and wouldn't even talk for days. She was getting them help and giving them a stable loving home. The woman said, "I can return to my job once I get them well enough and potty trained again. They really need this time here to learn to feel secure again." I asked what assistance she had applied for and she had applied for all the appropriate assistance. She was waiting for the assistance to begin and once it did she would be in a much better place financially. Until then she would not be able to afford a larger apartment or a different vehicle. I told her we would pay her overdue rent to bring her up to date and her utilities to get her through this tough time. She was very grateful for our offer of this assistance. She said, "You have no idea how much stress that removes for me. I was so worried I would be causing further trauma for these kids. The last thing they needed was to end up homeless." I agreed with her whole heartedly.

I asked the woman to point out her car in the parking lot and I stepped outside to take a look. It was a very small car with really only room for four passengers. With two car seats and a booster seat it would be impossible for them all to ride in. I knew we would need to find them a minivan or SUV to accommodate her larger family.

I went back inside the apartment and again the children were startled and scared. After a few minutes and the woman's reassurances they calmed down. I told the woman we would be providing her a larger vehicle and this time she burst into happy tears. All she could keep saying was, "Thank you, thank you." That is when I told her about all of "You" and how you make all our assistance possible. She listened and then said, "Such wonderful people and they do not even know me or the children. They are so generous to give to someone they do not even know." I told her how I share with all of "You" the desperate needs of people like her family and how "You" feel like you do know who you are helping when I am done sharing our fellow creations pains of poverty.

After thoroughly reviewing her budget going forward I felt confident she could get by once she received her assistance and was able to return to work. Our assistance got her through the uncertain few months when she had no income and four children looking to her for food, shelter and love. Thanks to all of "You" she was able to keep the children safe, fed and give them the time to heal emotionally.

Two months later the children have improved tremendously. The love and counseling have turned them into happy children again. Our assistance provided first month's rent and security deposit in a three bedroom apartment, giving them the room they needed. We also provided bunk beds and mattresses for the children. Her small car was traded for a minivan that gave them the safe transportation they needed. The woman told me she would be returning to her job in a few weeks and also said her boss had even offered her a raise as he had realized how much he needed her help and she needed an increased income. She again told me to thank all of "You" for your generosity that took her from worried and afraid to finding happiness again in her life.

There are many of our fellow creations turning to us for help or being referred by others. The children, the handicapped, the elderly, those that cannot fend for themselves, those living in desperate need will be crying happy tears of relief thanks to all of "You", the Fox Charities New Year Wish \$25,000 Matching Grant and The Time Is Now to Help working together to provide poverty relief. Please donate now knowing every dollar will be matched, doubling your donation. Together "We" make a difference removing the pains of poverty for our fellow creations. Thank you and God Bless you.

*Health & Happiness, Love & God Bless Everyone, W.C./Sal*

**Please Help:** There are many coming to us in desperation. Our good fellow creations need our compassion. Together we make a big difference. Make checks payable to: The Time Is Now to Help, P.O. Box 1, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. The Time Is Now to Help is a federally recognized 501(c)3 charitable organization licensed in the states of Wisconsin and Illinois. You will receive a tax deductible, itemized thank you receipt showing how your donation provided assistance for the poverty stricken.

**Upcoming Event:** The Souper Bowl of Caring project will be held at St. Joseph's Church, 6068 Water Street, Lyons, WI on Super Bowl weekend, Feb 5, 2017. They will be having a free soup luncheon on Sunday, February 5th from 10:30 am-1:00 pm in the Parish Center (corner of Mill and Water Streets in Lyons). The free soup lunch includes all you can eat homemade soups, bread, beverage and dessert. They also will be collecting monetary and food donations at their masses to support both The Time Is Now to Help and the W.C. Food Pantry.

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**Memorials:** Sue & Mike Borden in memory of Gayle Leep. Paul Ziegler in memory of his dear friend Dorith Brown. Duane Harma in memory of his wife Donna.

**Prayer Chain:** A big “thank you” for all of your prayers and good thoughts. We have received phone calls and letters from those that have gotten well. Some of our loved ones have had their cancer go into remission, some have had their enormous anguish of pain physically healed. The power of prayer and positive thoughts comes from the true healer, our Lord answering our prayers. Please pray for healing for the following people: Mike, Caroline, Susan, Jennifer, Clarence, Jayden, Santana, Alex, Lily, Kaitlyn, Kynesha, Brandi’s Grandma, Marilyn & Lois.

**Inspiration Ministries Resale Shop:** Please donate your gently used household items and furniture to the Inspiration Ministries Resale Shop. For local pick up of major items or collection appointments please call (262) 275-2264. Inspiration Ministries Resale Shop is located at N2270 State Rd. 67, Walworth, WI 53184. Hours: Monday – Saturday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Closed Sundays. Please visit often knowing your support will provide life changing assistance for the fellow creations in their care. Inspiration Ministries is home for up to 80 residents that live with multiple physical and mental challenges. I thank all of you for helping. For more information visit [www.inspirationministries.org](http://www.inspirationministries.org).

Please visit: [www.timeisnowtohelp.org](http://www.timeisnowtohelp.org)